

even though we are the world's best customers.

Later on tonight, we will be talking about that issue and whether or not there is a way that we, here in the House, can exercise the will of the people and get something done on that issue before we go home for the break.

BEWARE THE GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to associate myself with the remarks of both my colleague, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) and also my colleague, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) in the concern about what happened in the Medicare conference committee on prescription drugs.

It is sad that we came here to talk about a prescription drug plan for seniors, but we are actually going to take it away from them in the process. But the reason I am here tonight, Mr. Speaker, is to talk about the problem we have in our country with the unemployment.

Mr. Speaker, as we embark on what we hope will be our last week in sessions before the holiday recess, I rise to warn my colleagues about the ghost of Christmas Past, the economic mistakes that Congress and this administration have made on the eve of past holidays. Let us take time to learn from those mistakes and not recreate them.

I can say with confidence that each Member of this Chamber was pleased to hear the impressive economic growth figures for July through September. Over the past 3 years, this country has suffered through some of the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression, and it was certainly uplifting to see the reports of 7.2 percent growth in gross domestic product. While we remain optimistic about an economic rebound for the country, I, however, caution my colleagues against relying on the sustainability of this economic growth.

Economic indicators show that these figures were the result of consumer spending and a tremendous boost in the housing market. Yet with consumer spending outpacing consumer income, it is clear that spending cannot fuel our economic growth indefinitely. Let us remember our reaction to similar news in 2002. After months of job losses and a dismal economic growth, the country boasted growth of 5 percent in the first quarter of 2002. Despite our optimism, however, job losses continued and the next quarter yielded a 1.3 percent growth.

This time last year we were celebrating third quarter growth of 4 percent, and like today, entering the holidays with high hopes. Needless to say, our hopes were dashed and the country has since endured the worst job condi-

tions in 20 years. These are our ghosts of Christmas Past, the flurry of mistaken optimism that failed to deliver on its economic promises.

Like the optimism of Christmas Past, this recent economic growth belies the fact that our manufacturing sector has cut jobs for the 39th straight month. My State of Texas, with 1.6 million lost jobs, ranks third in the amount of manufacturing jobs lost since September of 2000. While the country may be making modest gains in employment, 6 percent of America's workers are still unemployed. Almost one-quarter of these 8.8 million people have been out of work for more than 6 months. These figures do not even count the discouraged workers, 462,000 Americans who have completely given up looking for jobs and are no longer on our unemployment rolls.

Fortunately, many former unemployed workers have found jobs, but we must examine the kind of jobs they are turning to; 4.8 million Americans work part-time, but only because they cannot find full-time work, and many of these workers are former engineers, former computer technicians who previously earned up to \$60,000 a year, but now must settle for \$7.50 an hour at a retail store.

No amount of economic statistics can hide the realities that these people face. Our unemployed workers are hurting. Our unemployed families are draining their savings to survive. And this Congress holds in its hands the ability to extend their unemployment benefits.

Let me remind my colleagues that the holiday season is the time of the year when we give thanks for our blessings and extend our hearts to the less fortunate. Last year, that important lesson must have been lost on the majority's leadership, because Congress packed up for the year without extending unemployment benefits.

That is right. Congress left town to enjoy the holidays and in doing so, left America's unemployed workers in the cold.

Mr. Speaker, this year is no different. Unfortunately, if we do not act soon, the Ghost of Christmas Past will be forced to remind us of the tremendous mistake we made by withholding these benefits last year. Even Scrooge learned from his mistakes.

I implore the administration and my colleagues to let us take a hard, realistic look at our economy and make sure that any recovery helps the Americans who have been most hurt by this downturn, and above all, let us pass the extension of the temporary unemployment benefits before we adjourn for the holidays.

It is the right thing to do for our economy and for America's unemployed.

IRAQ PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the Coalition Provisional Authority which is the title of the American authority overseeing the reconstruction of Iraq, and the Bush administration which created it, are openly dissatisfied with the stories the media has chosen to broadcast regarding the United States' role in Iraq. In fact, they say the news media too often covers the negative events that occur in Iraq, but rarely reports any positive happenings there. They even pressured reporters to find the so-called good news in Iraq or lose access in an attempt to manipulate the stories coming out of Iraq.

Let us keep in mind that over 400 American soldiers have died in Iraq since the start of the war in March. That is more than 11 brave young men and women killed each week. It is hard to find the good news when our sons and daughters keep coming home in body bags. And it is exceptionally insulting to the families of these victims to complain about media bias at the same time four helicopters have been destroyed by enemy fire over the last 2 weeks.

The situation in Iraq is getting less safe for our troops, not safer. In addition to the 404 troops killed in action, over 2,000 have been wounded and another 7,000 have been evacuated for noncombat medical conditions. And yet, the President continues to complain about media bias. So what has the White House decided to do about the quote/unquote "unfair reporting" by the media?

Why, bypass that very media, of course. The President's handlers plan to influence public perception by creating a government-run broadcast operation to provide American news agencies unfettered access to the real stories in Iraq. This broadcasting system which the administration unofficially refers to as C-SPAN Bagdad will run via satellite 24 hours a day. C-SPAN Bagdad. More like American Al-Jazeera, the media giant that reports to the Arab world in a very biased fashion.

The White House is increasingly aware, of course, that President Bush's fate in the upcoming 2004 election is directly linked to the progress of the war in Iraq. So bypassing the third-party national media allows the Bush administration to mold public perception of the war effort. I think our country's founders would be ashamed to know that at the same time hundreds of our soldiers and thousands of Iraqi civilians are dying, President Bush is thinking about the chances for reelection. That is nothing short of appalling.

But equally appalling is that the American taxpayer will finance this shameful propaganda machine. That is right. The administration is directing money from the \$87 billion emergency supplemental spending bill that Congress approved last month to help pay